

iStuff: Gadgets for Your iPod

Just as the original iMac's unique rounded shape and Bondi blue plastic case inspired hundreds of brightly colored add-ons from other companies back in the late 1990s, the iPod has similarly energized the MP3 player accessories market. Online and in stores, you can find dozens of iPod-themed add-ons created to protect, enhance, and improve your iPodding adventures.

This chapter looks at some of the things you can buy to go with your iPod and where to find them—from a waterproof case to keep out the rain to an attachment that turns your iPod into a storage locker for digital photos.

That's right: you can now buy gadgets for your gadget.

Where to Shop

Since the iPod's arrival in 2001, its accessories market has been growing by leaps and bounds, and there are several online iPod superstores around now with a huge selection of merchandise, from stylish cases to snap-on FM radios. If you want to see what's out there without even having to leave your desk, the bigger Pod-focused Web shops include:

- **The Apple Store** (<http://store.apple.com>). Apple has pages and pages of products for all its iPod offspring, with easy ordering if you already have an Apple ID and credit card on file with the company from previous iPod and iTunes purchases.
- **Everything iPod** (www.everythingipod.com). One of the first iPod shops to open its virtual doors, Everything iPod sells a wide variety of gadgets, from car chargers to the iBoom box (page 334). The site also offers cases made by Digital Lifestyle Outfitters for every current iPod model; Figure C-1 shows a selection.

- **XtremeMac** (www.xtrememac.com). XtremeMac has an extremely large amount of iPod merchandise. It's notable for its sporty TuffWrap cases for active music lovers and miles of sleek white audio cables to connect the iPod to car stereos and home audio systems.
- **Think Different Store** (www.thinkdifferentstore.com). You can find tons of cases, speakers and docks here, plus a CD-ripping service if you don't have the time to get your own music on the iPod.
- **Griffin Technology** (www.griffintechology.com). With its iTrip line of FM transmitters and crafty SmartDock (both described in Chapter 10), Griffin's forte is products that get your iPod thumping through the car and home stereo speakers. The company also sells a handful of cases and items like the RadioShark and iFM, which are designed to add broadcast radio to your computer and iPod.



Figure C-1:
The Podfolio for the video iPod by DLO (left) protects the player, both front and back. The company makes cases for all models of iPod, including the Action Jacket for the Shuffle (center) and the fashionable Fling case for the Nano (right). Find all cases pictured here (and many that aren't) at www.everythingipod.com.

Other companies like Belkin (www.belkin.com), Kensington (www.kensington.com) and Monster Cable (www.monstercable.com) have healthy iPod accessory sections on their sites, especially if you're looking for cables, docks, FM transmitters, and the like.

Computer and electronics stores like CompUSA, Circuit City, and Best Buy usually have a section devoted to iPod cases and speakers. And as a sign of the iPod's mainstream cultural significance, even all-purpose suburban bazaars like Target also include a rack or two of iPod stuff for sale.

Cases

Once you get your iPod loaded with music, you'll want to take it with you without worrying about scuffs and scratches.

Apple used to include a basic black sheath-type case (with belt clip) for some models, but now sells it separately on its site and in stores. Unless you use a remote control, however, you have to keep taking the player out of the case to operate the controls—which is not only a drag but also an opportunity to drop the iPod on the sidewalk. An iPod taking a face plant onto the concrete is a horrible sight.

The first iPod Nanos rolling off the Apple assembly line proved to be especially scratch-prone, and although a thin pocket protector-style cover is included with Nanos and iPods now, this slip case is mainly there to protect the Pod when it's *not* in use, as it completely covers the screen and click wheel.

When selecting a case, keep in mind the situations in which you tend to use your iPod. If you use the iPod for running, you may prefer a waterproof neoprene case with an armband; if you take it on business trips, you may prefer a more professional-looking covering. Some cases make the scroll wheel and controls easy to get to, while others conceal the front of the iPod to protect it. So take into account how often you use the controls for changing volume, skipping songs, or checking addresses.

Note: There are tons of cases out there for every iPod model, but the cases vary as much as the iPod designs do. For example, the video-playing iPods have bigger screens and thinner bodies than, say, the original iPod Photo. Check the packaging or inquire about which cases fit which models before you buy, so both you and the iPod get a good fit.

Here are a few cases that stand out.

iSkin

If fear of scratches prevents you from taking your iPod or iPod Nano out much, check out the line of form-fitting silicone iSkin sleeves, available in a rainbow of vibrant colors. The washable rubber iSkin cases feature heat-ventilation pores and tiny raised feet on the back to help air circulate around an iPod laid flat on a desk. The new iSkin eVo3 case includes a rotating belt clip and scratch-resistant screen protector for the video iPod. Other case colors in the iSkin line even glow in the dark, making it easier to find your iPod at 3 a.m. Prices range from \$20 to \$35 at www.iskin.com.

Matias iPod Armor

The iPod Armor ensures that *nothing* scars your iPod—even if you fall off your snowboard and tumble downhill over rough terrain. As shown in Figure C-2, the hard aluminum case completely covers the iPod front and back, leaving only a small hole for the earbud cord; a layer of foam protects what's inside. No matter which model you have (there is Armor for all, except for the Shuffle), your iPod winds up like Han Solo encased in the carbonite block.



Figure C-2:
The iPod Armor seals in the iPod and keeps out dings and dents with its sturdy aluminum shell. Just pop off the front plate (right) to get to the controls. The iPod Armor fits all models and sells for \$40 at <http://matias.ca/ipodarmor>. In addition to the Mini case, there's also a Nano suit of Armor for sale, too.

Tip: A case is intended to protect your iPod's surface, but scuffs, smears, and scratches can still happen (like when you're pulling it *out* of the case).

If you accidentally gouge your iPod's surface, try the iCleaner Scratch Remover, a nonabrasive solution that can help restore the smooth surface of the iPod. The iCleaner package comes with enough polish for about 20 buffings, plus a cleaning towel and instructions. You can get it for \$15 (and often less) at www.icleaner.com.

Contour Design iSee

Like new parents, new iPod Nano owners typically like to show off their babies to the world while still keeping them well protected. With a case designed from clear plastic, the iSee case from Contour Designs lets proud iPodders do a little of both. It sells for \$20 at www.contourcase.com, where clear cases for other iPods are also available.

Podwear and Other Fashion Statements

Everyone knows the iPod is a fashion statement itself, but if you want to carry the idea even further, you can find all kinds of iPod-related fashion statements available to purchase online.

Burton, known for its snowboarding togs and gear, was one of the first companies to mix iPod and outerwear with its \$330 iPod Jacket, a coat designed for music-loving snowboarders. It includes a molded pocket for maximum iPod protection, and a cable to connect the player to the coat itself. Burton's new line of Audex coats even use built-in Bluetooth connections to control iPod and mobile phone from the sleeve. Prices for Audex togs start around \$600, and the coats can be found at sporting-goods stores like www.paragonsports.com.

For those who can't quite cough up that much cash for iPod-fused clothing, there's also the \$40 Burton Headphone Beanie, a warm winter cap with headphones built tight into the ear flaps.

Owners of the iPod Shuffle can literally wear their music players on their sleeves with the Shuffle Shirt, which includes a snug Shuffle pocket on the left arm. Shuffle Shirts are available with or without witty slogans ("I shuffle...therefore I am") across the front; each shirt sells for \$20 at www.shuffleshirt.com.

And if your iPod feels like it needs clothes, too, consider the Apple's own iPod Socks, a set of six different knitted slipcovers to pull over your iPod to protect it from scratches, dings and other scuffable incidents. The \$29 set comes with pink, blue, orange, gray, purple, and green socks, and is sold at <http://store.apple.com> as well as other online merchants like Amazon.com. Just be sure to match your iPod's outfit to your own or people will talk.

XtremeMac Micro Cases

If you're looking for a distinguished wallet-style wrap for your video iPod, XtremeMac has several to choose from, including the earth-toned MicroFlip and MicroFolio cases and the more feminine pink or white MicroFolioChic cover. Figure C-3 shows a sample of each, and they can be purchased for \$40 from www.xtrememac.com.



Figure C-3: XtremeMac's Micro family, which includes (from left to right) Folio, Flip, and FolioChic, bring a wallet-style sensibility to the world of iPod cases.

Marware SportSuit Convertible

Some activities are higher impact than others, and the SportSuit Convertible case comes prepared for a variety of sporting occasions and for a variety of iPods, including the Nano and the video iPod. The neoprene case has a hard removable lid that you can snap on when the going gets rough. The SportSuit Convertible comes in six different colors and includes an armband and a belt clip. It sells for \$35 at www.marware.com, where a handsome leather “CEO Classic” iPod case is also available. There’s also a full line of cases for older iPods and a whimsical SportSuit Safari series that lets you deck your lil’ Nano out in furry animal-print patterns.

Monster iCase Travel Pack

Designed for people who like to take all their iPod accessories with them when they go, the zippered nylon iCase Travel Pack from Monster Cable has pockets and pouches galore on the inside and even includes a few of Monster’s own iPod products to help fill it up. The iCase Travel Pack (shown in Figure C-4) comes with an iCharger iPod car charger and an iSplitter connector so two pairs of headphones can listen in on the same playlist. It sells for \$70 at www.monstercable.com.



Figure C-4:
The roadworthy Monster iCase has a place for practically everything you might need to have for iPodding around town.

Tip: Many women find the belt clip option just doesn’t work with their wardrobe, especially with the clean lines of, say, a Donna Karan suit. Enter the Groove Speaker Purse for iPod, which not only serves as an iPod carrying case, but also incorporates built-in speakers into a large handbag. Two different purse styles are available, and each costs about \$145 at www.welovemacs.com.

Shufflin’ Off to the Shuffle Store

You can find iPod Shuffle accessories pretty much anywhere you find products for bigger iPods, but here are a few to keep an eye out for, and they’re all available at the Apple Store (<http://store.apple.com>):

POWER USERS' CLINIC

Two for Tunes

While lots of these good-looking goodies are purely for the iPod, a couple of hardware items from Griffin Technology can enhance the digital music experience on the desktop side of things. Both devices work with Windows and Macs, and are available at www.griffintechnology.com.

The Power-Mate USB Controller & Input Device, pictured here, looks like a plain old volume knob from a stereo console. But when you plug it into the computer's USB port, you can spin the dial to control the contents of just about any window on your screen. You can program the Power-Mate to control the iTunes volume level, scroll through insufferably long Web pages and documents, or advance quickly through camcorder footage in a video-editing program. You can even program it to perform key commands. The controller, which sells for \$45, works with just about any application.

Not all computers, especially laptops, come with an audio-input or microphone jack for recording your own sounds and songs directly onto the computer's hard drive. For those without, the iMic (\$40) universal audio adapter, pictured here at right, connects to the USB port and provides the computer with stereo input and output jacks.

Because the iMic is outside the loud, whirring computer, it often gets better audio quality than an internal microphone going through the sound card. (Software included can further customize the device's audio settings.)

The iMic uses a standard stereo miniplug jack and can record from other music sources, like a MiniDisc player or stereo system, making it possible to record some of those old vinyl albums onto the computer and convert them to MP3 for use on the iPod.



- **The iPod Shuffle Sport Case.** The iPod Shuffle isn't waterproof, so if you plan to go running with it in the morning mist or lounge around in the salt spray of the beach, this \$30 protective cover, complete with neck strap, is a good idea.
- **The iPod Shuffle Arm Band.** Runners and gym hounds probably don't want their music player flying all over the place during a workout. The \$30 white Arm Band securely straps the Shuffle to your bicep where it rides along as you jog or pump iron.
- **The iPod Shuffle External Battery Pack.** You get about 12 hours of playtime between charges with the Shuffle, but you can add on to that with this \$30 snap-on attachment that adds the juice from two AA batteries. Although it adds some weight to the Shuffle, you can squeeze about 20 hours of music out of the player and make that long flight to New Zealand a little more entertaining.
- **The iPod Shuffle Dock.** This \$30 combination stand and USB extension cord, shown in Figure C-5, lets your Shuffle stand at attention while you have it hooked to the Mac or PC. The Dock can be helpful for people with computers that have USB ports in hard to reach places or jacks that are too close together to fit a Shuffle in alongside another USB device.



Figure C-5:
The iPod Shuffle gets a dock to call its own, and its long USB cable lets you keep the player within easy reach for charging and syncing—with no trips under the desk to connect it to dusty, hard-to-get-to USB ports on the back of the computer.

iPod Extenders

There are so many new add-on gadgets for the iPod, the average consumer might be forgiven for forgetting all about its music-playing abilities. There have been hundreds of iPod accessories over the years, but because Apple often changes the internal and external design of its signature products, compatibility can be all over the map. So make sure the doo-dad you've got your heart set on actually works with your model iPod.

For example, the voice recorders made by Belkin and Griffin Technology don't work on the newest iPod models, but work on the third and fourth-generation iPods that arrived in 2003 and 2004. If you want to record voice memos on a fifth-generation video iPod, the MicroMemo Voice Recorder (\$80 at www.xtrememac.com) is one option. The point here is to make sure that the object of your accessory affection actually works with the iPod you have.

If you want to keep up with the iPod accessories mad dash to the marketplace, check in regularly with Web sites like the iLounge (www.ilounge.com) and the iPod News Network (www.ipodnn.com) for news and reviews of the latest products. Here are a few iPod add-ons worth mentioning.

iPod Camera Connector

Odds are your digital camera's memory card is smaller than your iPod's hard drive, but the iPod Camera Connector lets you put the two together and turn the iPod into an image vault to store pictures. Once you link camera and media player

together with this \$30 square of white plastic and electronics, your pictures are copied to the iPod (where you can see them on screen) and your camera's memory card is emptied and ready for more action. The iPod Camera Connector, available at <http://store.apple.com>, works with color-screen iPods including the iPod Photo and the video iPod, but not with the iPod Nano.

Note: Belkin makes two accessories for older iPods that can turn them into image vaults to store images from your camera's overloaded memory card until you can get back to your computer. The Digital Camera Link (\$40) and the Media Reader (\$50) work with third and fourth-generation iPods with monochrome screens. They are both at www.belkin.com.

iPod Radio Remote

The wired remote control is one accessory that's sorely missed by people who've upgraded to a 2005-era iPod...only to find that Apple no longer includes such goodies right in the box. But the company's Radio Remote helps take the sting away. This \$49 remote (which looks curiously like a truncated iPod Shuffle with its white ring of controls) not only lets you run your iPod without having to fiddle with the click wheel, it also pulls in FM radio stations and displays the radio tuner right on the iPod screen. It works with the iPod Nano and the video iPod and can be snatched up at <http://store.apple.com>.

Griffin iFM

In addition to adding live FM radio to your iPod, the iFM from Griffin Technology (available in a dock-connecting version for video iPods and iPod Nanos, and a headphone-connection model for older iPods) provides a remote control that lets you keep your iPod safely in its case while you pause, play, and jump around through your playlists. The iFM, shown in Figure C-6, sells for \$50 at www.griffintechnology.com.

Belkin TuneDok

The iPod snaps into the cradle, and the TuneDok's suction cup anchors the mount firmly into your car's cup holder. The TuneDok lets you adjust both the height and angle of the iPod and has a clip to keep cables out of the way. Shown in Figure C-7, it works for both old and new iPod models (there's even one designed to fit the Mini so it can go riding, too), and it sells for \$30 at www.belkin.com.

Tip: Just in case you don't have enough wires coming out of your head already, meet the Skullcandy LINK. When a call comes in on your cellphone, the LINK throttles back the iPod music volume automatically, so you can still groove to your tunes while chatting away. (Your conversation partner, of course, doesn't hear the music.)

The gizmo attaches to a pair of headphones or earbuds (your choice) and is available to fit five different types of cellphone audio connector jacks (\$40 or so at www.skullcandy.com).



Figure C-6:

The iFM from Griffin Technology gives you two gadgets in one for your iPod—an FM radio to let you keep up with all the broadcast news and sports, plus a remote control to command your music.

iSee 360i

This \$250 attachment (see it in Figure C-8; get it at w3.isee-ato.com) from ATO borrows some disk space and turns your connected iPod into a palm-sized video recorder that can directly record from the TV or any other analog source. Once you've recorded video to your iPod's drive, you can play it back on its own 3.6-inch color screen that's 91 percent bigger than the video iPod's own display. Better yet, you don't even need to have a video iPod to use the iSee 360i, as the device also works with most fourth-generation iPods, as well as the Nano and the Mini.

Power Adapters

It never hurts to have a spare power adapter, so that you don't have to keep hauling your laptop around when you need to recharge the iPod on the road. (If you're looking for an automobile charger to use for powering the iPod through the car's cigarette lighter, see page 221.)

- **The iPod USB Power Adapter** is a boxy set of prongs plugs into the wall socket just like the AC adapter that used to ship with regular iPods. It's got a USB jack on the other side so you can plug your Shuffle right in for some charging



Figure C-7:
Just plant the Belkin TuneDok in the nearest available cup holder (shown here with and without the iPod bracket), and you and your iPod are ready to hit the road. Belkin also sells FM transmitters and cassette adapters that let your iPod's playlists pour forth from the car radio.

instead of using a powered USB port on the computer. You can use the Adapter with a USB 2.0 cable to charge up a regular iPod or iPod Nano, too. It sells for \$30 at <http://store.apple.com> and also comes in a FireWire version for older iPods.

- **The Apple World Travel Adapter Kit** works with the iPod's optional AC adapter (page 18) for electrical outlets in North America, the United Kingdom, Continental Europe, Australia, Japan, China, Korea, and Hong Kong. (As international travelers know, all electrical outlets are not created equal. Not only is the voltage often different in other countries, but the outlets have differing plugs.) It's \$40 in the iPod Accessories section at <http://store.apple.com>.
- **Monster iAirCharger** does what a car charger does, except on an airplane: refills your iPod's battery so the music doesn't run out on that long flight from New York to Sydney. The iAirCharger uses the same type of 15-volt connector found in the armrests of seats in first and business class and also includes an adapter to work with most car cigarette lighters. It comes with a three-foot cord and sells for \$30 at www.monstercable.com.

Battery Boosters

An iPod with a dead battery is no fun at all. Here are some items designed to keep the music playing, even when the battery is not.



Figure C-8: Behind the big video screen (top), lies an iPod hard at work (bottom), storing and playing back the video you've recorded. The iSee 360i has a rechargeable battery and can also play back photo sideshows and videos on the TV.

- **Belkin Backup Battery Pack** can supply 15 to 20 hours of music (or six hours of extra video play) even after the iPod battery has run down. You put four regular AA batteries into this pack, and then clamp it onto the back of the iPod with suction cups. The flat dock connector plugs into the bottom of the music player to feed it energy (\$50 at www.belkin.com).

- **Replacement Battery for iPods.** The iPod's internal rechargeable battery is intended to last the life of the player—but extremely heavy use might cause the battery to slow down or conk out. Although Apple has its own \$59 battery-replacement service (take a deep breath and read down the page at www.apple.com/support/ipod/service/battery), there's a way to do it yourself for less money if you don't mind voiding the warranty—especially if it's already out of date anyway.
- **Laptops for Less** sells rechargeable replacement batteries designed to fit both the original and dock-connecting iPod models. Illustrated instructions on its Web site let you see what you're getting into before you buy the battery. (Warning: it involves screwdrivers, rulers, and the forcible prying-open of iPods.) Prices for replacement iPod batteries (including Minis), start at \$30 at www.ipodbattery.com.
- **Other World Computing** sells a line of replacement iPod batteries made by Newer Technology. Better yet, the Newer batteries offer more capacity and can extend the time between charges by up to 50 percent. Batteries cost \$30 or less at <http://eshop.macsales.com/shop/ipod/batteryreplacement>.
- **PDASmart.com** sells regular and extended-life replacement batteries for older iPod models as well. If you're squeamish about cracking open the iPod case, mail it to them, and they'll do it for you for the mere fee of \$68, or less, for parts and labor, depending on the iPod model getting the fix. The site is a regular iPod Garage for parts and service, especially for older models—they fix busted audio jacks, replace hard drives, and repair damaged LCD display screens. Check out www.pdasmart.com/ipodpartscenter.htm for more information.

Speakers for the iPod

You can hook up your iPod to a home audio system to share your sounds, but sometimes it's more convenient to get the iPod a set of speakers to call its own. Most speakers designed to take input from a portable CD or MP3 player work fine with the iPod, but here are a few notable options.

Note: The iPod accessories category has grown by leaps and bounds since 2001, and you can find a huge selection of speakers, docks, and cables in most electronics shops and retail Apple Stores. If there are no physical Apple Stores near you, let your fingers do the walking over to the virtual storefront at <http://store.apple.com>.

Altec Lansing inMotion Portable iPod Speakers

Portable, self-powered, and supremely Podly, Altec Lansing's line of new inMotion speakers have been letting iPods raise the roof with booming sound for several years. The company makes dockable speakers that fit full-size iPods, Nanos, and Minis, and prices range from about \$250 for the totally tubular iM7 speakers for regular iPods to \$130 for the iMmini speakers for the iPod Mini. When

plugged in, the speakers also charge the connected iPod and many inMotion models come with remote controls. The full line of inMotion speakers can be seen online at www.alteclansing.com/inmotion.

Sony SRS-T57 Folding Travel Speakers

Whether your journey is long or short, these speakers won't take up much room in your bag, because you can fold them in half and tuck them away until you want to turn on the music. The speakers take four AA batteries or an optional power adapter. They're at www.sonymstyle.com for \$50.

Tivoli Audio iPAL

This boxy yet portable AM/FM radio has a great big speaker and an audio line input that allows the iPod to jack in and rock out. Because the iPAL is also a radio, the iPod can also borrow its speaker by way of an FM transmitter like the iTrip (page 215). It works with all iPods, and sells for \$150 in the iPod Accessories section at <http://store.apple.com>.

DLO iBoom

Boomboxes may have fallen out of favor, but the iBoom from Digital Lifestyle Outfitters lets you combine your iPod with a four-speaker system that can crank out 20 watts of sound per channel. The iBoom also includes an FM radio. It runs on six D batteries or its AC power cord and fits dock-connecting iPods, including the Mini. You can find it at www.everythingipod.com.

JBL On Stage II

Its circular design makes it look like your iPod is stepping off a spaceship, but the On Stage portable speaker system from JBL surrounds your iPod with a force field of music, courtesy of its four Odyssey neodymium drivers. Tipping the scales at just a pound, the On Stage is light enough to take anywhere and makes sure your iPod always has a seat at the party. The JBL On Stage speaker sells for about \$200 on Apple's site at <http://store.apple.com>.

Bose SoundDock

The Bose Corporation, known for its high-end, powerful audio systems and noise-canceling headphones, has directed its attention toward the iPod and come up with the SoundDock, a mighty sound system for your dock-connecting iPod. The iPod sits upright in a cradle in front of a massive speaker that gives new meaning to "wall of sound." The SoundDock sells for \$300 at www.bose.com.

XtremeMac MicroBlast for iPod Nano

Crafted just for the iPod Nano, the MicroBlast system lets the skinny little iPod maximize its sound with four powered speakers tucked inside its small frame. Selling for \$120 at www.xtrememac.com, the MicroBlast comes with both black and

white frames so you can match or contrast your Nano as it sits proudly in the middle of the unit.

Sonic Impact I-Pax Portable Speaker System for iPod Shuffle

Even the tiny iPod Shuffle gets to shout out with this set of portable speakers that fold out into docking station and sound system combined. The \$80 carry-along Shuffle music station can run off electrical power or four AA batteries and is among the speaker sets available for a wide range of iPod models at <http://store.apple.com>.

Apple iPod Hi-Fi

Apple joined the external speaker party in early 2006 with its iPod Hi-Fi, a shoebox-size black-and-white unit with a built-in iPod cradle. It's designed with all the touches you might expect from the iPod's parent: a click-wheel style remote control, an internal power supply (no clunky power brick to deal with), and an analog and digital optical input jack (good for a nearby radio or CD player or, better yet, an Airport Express to tap into all the iTunes floating around on your home network). The Hi-Fi also has a rear battery compartment if you want to boom this box outside. The Hi-Fi sells for \$349 on Apple's site at <http://store.apple.com>.

